

and locations. Those numbers have not improved as the conflict has continued.

By the third international pledging conference on March 31, 2015, the crisis had become the largest displacement crisis in the world, with 3.8 million people having fled to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, in addition to those internally displaced. In support of the Syria Response Plan and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, international donors pledged US\$3.8 billion. However, according to the Financial Tracking Service at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs or OCHA, only \$1.17 billion of \$2.89 billion in the plan had been received as of December 7th. This constitutes only 41% of what is considered necessary by OCHA.

Last week's hearing focused on the plight of persecuted religious minorities in Syria and Iraq, which constitutes genocide, and the failure of much of the international community to live up to their pledges of humanitarian assistance, factors which "push" refugees to Europe and beyond. In particular, we will examine violence targeting religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis (a non-Islamic religious minority) in territory controlled by ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

This past September, the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum undertook a "Bearing Witness" trip to northern Iraq to investigate allegations of genocide being committed by ISIS. In a report entitled "Our Generation is Gone" The Islamic State's Targeting of Iraqi Minorities in Nineveh," the report stated that: "Based upon the public record and private eyewitness accounts, we believe the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) perpetrated crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing against Christian, Yazidi, Turkmen, Shabak, Sabaeen-Mandaean, and Kaka'i people in Nineveh province between June and August 2014. In our interviews, we heard accounts of the forcible transfer of populations, severe deprivation of physical liberty, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, and murder perpetrated in a widespread and systematic manner that indicates a deliberate plan to target religious and ethnic minorities. Some specific communities—notably the Yazidi, but also Shia Shabak and Shia Turkmen—were targeted for attack."

Mirza Ismail, Chairman and Founder of the Yazidi Human Rights Organization-International, testified that the Yazidis are on the verge of annihilation.

Chaldean Bishop Francis Kalabat testified that, "There are countless Christian villages in Syria who have been taken over by ISIS and have encountered genocide and the Obama administration refuses to recognize their plight."

Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, calls on the Obama administration to publicly acknowledge that genocide is taking place against the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria. Mr. Anderson testified that "vulnerable religious minorities fear taking shelter in the camps of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees because of religiously motivated violence and intimidation inside the camps." "Syrian Christians", he notes, "and other vulnerable minorities are disproportionately excluded from the U.S. Syrian Refugee Resettlement Program due to reliance on a functionally discriminatory UNHCR program."

Dr. Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide Watch and research professor at George Mason University, in his testimony entitled "Weak Words Are Not Enough", he states, "Failure to call ISIS' mass murder of Christians, Muslims, and other groups in addition to Yazidis by its proper name—genocide—would be an act of denial as grave as U.S. refusal to recognize the Rwandan genocide in 1994."

The administration reportedly is considering declaring the ISIS treatment of Yazidis to be genocide, but there is no indication that Christians will be included. That's absurd. Such an action would be contrary to the facts and tragically wrong. Last year, a United Nations resolution determined that both Yazidis and Christians were being particularly targeted by ISIS.

A group of Christian leaders recently wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry to present their case for treating Christians the same as Yazidis in this matter, but they have not received a reply thus far.

As we attempt to end the ISIS threat, we must consider how to help ensure religious pluralism in Syria and Iraq in the future. That will not be an easy task since animosities have grown during the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, exponentially so during the rise and reign of terror of ISIS. Nevertheless, unless we consider how to help make these lands safe for religious minorities, we will continue to see them chased out of their traditional areas even if there is no ISIS.

Our witnesses last week provided us a picture of the ongoing struggle faced by religious minorities in ISIS territory, and hopefully, they will help us to begin the discussion of making these areas safe for their people in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO GRACIE RUSSELL

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Gracie Russell for being selected as the Creston Youth of the Year. Gracie is the daughter of Rob and Julie Russell.

Gracie is a senior at Creston High School and is active in FFA, volleyball, basketball, tennis, and the National Honor Society. She's also active in the community, volunteering her time with the Appalachian Service Project, Union County Youth Council, St. Malachy Youth Group, Douglas Boosters 4-H Club, and Iowa Junior Beef Breeds Association. Gracie has also participated in Meals from the Heartland, roadside cleanup, Rectory Rerun time, painting at McKinley Park, decorating the restored Creston Depot for Christmas activities, Balloon Days pedal pull time, Halloween safety at Early Childhood Center, planting trees around the community, and Open Table.

Mr. Speaker, the example set by Gracie is one all Iowans should strive for. Her willingness to serve truly embodies the Iowa spirit and I am honored to represent her and Iowans like her in the United States Congress. I ask that all of my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Gracie for this achievement and wishing her nothing but continued success.

HOUSTON'S BEST FROM TX-22

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Darius Anderson from George Ranch High School for being named the Touchdown Club of Houston's Offensive Player of the Year.

This running back sure can run. During his award winning senior year, Darius has rushed for over 1,700 yards and has 27 touchdowns. A young man of character and a strong work ethic, he no doubt makes his parents, coaches, and teachers proud. The next trophy in his sights? The football state championship trophy he and his teammates will compete for this weekend. Best of luck to Darius and his Longhorn teammates.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations to Darius for all of his success. We look forward to seeing where his football career takes him.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed Roll Call vote number 694. Had I been present, I would have voted aye on Roll Call vote number 694.

TRIBUTE TO CURT TURNER

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Curt Turner, of Creston, Iowa, for being selected as the Creston Citizen of the Year.

Curt Turner graduated from Diagonal High School as valedictorian and attended the United States Air Force Academy Preparatory School in Colorado Springs. He moved to Creston in 1978 and opened his own insurance agency, American Family Insurance, in 1986. By the time Curt retired in 2008, he had led the company nationally in farm sales for 10 consecutive years. During his 22 years of working in insurance, he was also a major contributor to the Creston community. He was a member of the Elks, served on the school board from 1990–1999, remains an active member of his church, and in his retirement, continues to serve the community as a local Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) volunteer.

Mr. Speaker, Curt's dedication to his community and willingness to serve represents all that is great with our state. His efforts embody the Iowa spirit and I am honored to represent him and Iowans like him in the United States Congress. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Curt for his achievements and wishing him nothing but continued success.